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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



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Subject: BEANS AND BEETS - THE NORTHEAST VICTORY SPECIAL (Including States north of Virginia and east of Ohio). Information from marketing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

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Here's the news for today--another Victory Food Special! Two of our favorite vegetables, beets and beans. The Department of Agriculture has set aside the dates from July 6 to July 11 when beets and beans will be sold as a Victory special.

We've been talking a lot about Victory Food Specials and, of course, you've been reading about them in the newspapers and seen them featured in the advertisements--but just because you might have missed some of my earlier broadcasts on these Victory Foods, I'm going to repeat how homemakers can help win the war by serving them. Secretary Wickard told us shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor that "Food Will Win the War and Write the Peace." Briefly this means conserving every bit of food we can--nothing must be allowed to go to waste. When foods are abundant, we sometimes are wasteful--that's where our Victory Food Specials come in. Right now there is an abundance of beets and beans all over our Northeastern States. But let's remember how many hungry mouths there are in the world, and let nothing go to waste.

Another important feature of Victory Food Specials is that the Department of Agriculture is asking us to consider transportation, and buy fruits and vegetables from local markets whenever possible. This means that many manhours may be saved which might otherwise be used in getting these foods to distant markets. It also means that freight cars, trucks and other conveyances, which would be used to haul these foods, can be put to more needed purposes--there are so many essential war materials, besides other freight, that simply must go long distances, and space is badly needed.

Victory Food Specials offer a real saving to the homemaker, too, because when they are in abundance, the crops are generally at the peak of quality and the prices more reasonable.

These are some of the answers on "Why Victory Food Specials"--- Now, for our beans. They are a very vital food. They are rich in Vitamin A, a good source of iron, calcium, and Vitamin C, and a fair source of Vitamin B₁. So here are some tips to get the best beans for your pot when you go to market. Select the fresh, bright, clean ones---free from blight spots. Most snap beans are of the green varieties with the wax, or yellow bean, making up the balance. They may be cooked separately---or try mixing them together. Some people like the mixed bean pot better.

The bulk of the snap beans found on local markets are coming from nearby farms in the Northeastern States---and the quality is considerably above that of supplies in recent weeks. Most homemakers have their favorite way of cooking beans---but, just for a change, you might try other recipes on your family and see which they like best. But here are a few tips that will help you no matter which way you decide to cook them-- First, as in all vegetables, use the least water possible, to conserve food values. When they are done there should be little or no water left in the boiler. Remember and don't add soda to keep the green color. Soda destroys the vitamin value. To cut cooking time -- have the water slightly salted and boiling when you put in the vegetables. If you cook with electricity and live where war industries make big power demands, plan to do as much of your cooking as you can before 5 o'clock---when lights going on in homes, factories and offices cause peak loads. And as a last precaution---don't overcook your vegetables. Consider snap beans cooked when there is still some firmness and body to them.

Well, that brings us to our second B -- B for Beans, butter and so many, many B's in the land of food -- but beets have a very special place in our Food Calendar, even besides being a Victory Food Special. First, you're really not buying just one

vegetable when you buy beets--but two! For you can use the greens as well as the beet roots. In the roots some sugars and starches are stored. They also contain thiamin, Vitamin C and riboflavin. In the greens are rich minerals and vitamins--particularly iron and carotene, which the body can change into Vitamin A. The greener and thinner the leaf, the more carotene and iron in it. They also contain goodly amounts of riboflavin, thiamin, niacin -- and, in their raw state, Vitamin C. So you see what rich food values you throw away if you don't serve the greens!

Look for beets that are smooth and free from blemish. Avoid flabby, withered beets--those with stringy roots, or with a lot of leaf scars around the neck. The tops should be fresh-looking, tender, and clean. In cooking, leave on the long taproot and an inch or two of the stems so they will keep their bright red color. And start them in boiling salted water--about one teaspoon of salt to a quart of water. Boil in their jackets and to speed the cooking, put on a lid. If the water is hard, the beet color may fade. Save it by putting a little vinegar or cream of tartar in the cooking water. A quick dip into cold water loosens the jacket on a cooked beet so that it slips off like a glove. Young beets take about 30 to 45 minutes to cook--the older ones longer. They may be served as buttered beets with meat drippings or melted fat. For variety, add a bit of chopped onion, or green pepper, and add a little vinegar, or squeeze a bit of lemon juice on them. Cold beets, either pickled or plain boiled, can be used for salads--either by themselves or in so many combinations.

In preparing the greens, wash them through several waters, and cook quickly in a small amount of salted boiling water. As soon as they are tender--drain and chop them. Season with fat and put little pieces of crisp bacon or salt pork over the top. A bit of chopped onion may be added for seasoning.

